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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ACCRA 001085

SIPDIS

LAGOS FOR DEA CLAYTON WHEELER  
DEPT FOR INL ERENI ROESS, G/TIP SALLY NEUMAN

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [EFIN](#) [GH](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS GHANA'S MINISTER OF INTERIOR

Classified By: Ambassador Mary C. Yates for reasons 1.5 d and e.

11. (C) Summary: On May 27, Ambassador paid a courtesy call on Ghana's new Minister of Interior, Papa Owusu-Ankomah. He hoped for increased assistance in counter-narcotics and noted that the Cabinet has approved a draft trafficking in persons (TIP) bill. He promised to respond to us on proposed amendments to Letters of Agreement on counternarcotics and TIP. He had security concerns about some Sudanese seeking refugee status. The draft money laundering bill is being reviewed by the financial community. He acknowledged heightened concerns about violent (although unsophisticated) criminals and small arms trafficking (we offer our assessment of crime and arms trafficking in the comment.) Owusu-Ankomah promises to be a good interlocutor on law enforcement issues. End summary.

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Counter-Narcotics  
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12. (SBU) Ambassador praised our excellent bilateral cooperation on law enforcement, especially in counter-narcotics. The Minister appreciated USG support, saying he hoped for continued support in counter-narcotics. Narcotics trafficking is a serious concern in Ghana, especially trafficking through Ghana for other countries. He would like to get sniffer dogs and more sophisticated narcotics detection equipment. The Ambassador noted our appreciation for the good cooperation from Narcotics Control Board (NCB) Executive Secretary Col. Isaac Akuoko. The Minister assured Ambassador that he recognized Akuoko's talents in a sensitive, critical organization and would maintain him in charge of the NCB for at least another two years.

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Trafficking in Persons  
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13. (SBU) Ambassador stressed the importance of passing an anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) bill (Note: Before becoming Minister of Interior, Owusu-Ankomah was the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, and was directly involved in preparing the TIP law. End note.) Owusu-Ankomah said the Cabinet had just approved the draft law. It will be gazetted soon and he hoped it would be submitted to parliament before this parliamentary session ends in late July.

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Letters of Agreement  
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14. (U) Ambassador asked about the status of two draft amendments to Letters of Agreement we have submitted for his review, one for cooperation on counter-narcotics and one on trafficking in persons. Owusu-Ankomah has studied the LOAs but had not realized these were two different agreements. He did not see a problem with the agreements and promised to respond to us, although it could take at least another month.

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Refugees  
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15. (C) The Ambassador complimented the Government of Ghana for its welcoming attitude toward refugees. On the recent arrival of 220 Sudanese refugees, Owusu-Ankomah said 120 of them have been adjudicated and the remainder will take about one more month to process. The GOG has to be very thorough with these cases "because of certain information we have" suggesting a potential security risk. Most of these Sudanese are from the Zagawa tribe and some may have been involved in Chad's civil war. While he has not yet received a recommendation from the Refugee Board, Owusu-Ankomah was inclined to err on the side of caution and refuse refugee status on security grounds, hoping the Chadian government would take them back. On Togolese refugees, Owusu-Ankomah said there were no asylum seekers because of strong family ties in Ghana. (Note: Post's RCO reports that Togolese have, in fact, applied for asylum at various embassies in Accra.

End note.)

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Money Laundering Bill  
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16. (SBU) A draft money laundering bill is being sent for further review by the financial community. According to Owusu-Ankomah, the Ministry of Finance and Bank of Ghana had not had an opportunity to review the draft legislation. Ghana is seriously looking at promoting offshore banking and, in this context, will be reviewing all of its banking laws, including the anti-money laundering bill. The Ambassador noted that the G-8 countries clearly see the money laundering bill in the context of counter-terrorism efforts. She hoped the GOG could separate banking from counter-terrorism issues in expediting the moneylaundering law. The Minister said he would take this up with the Attorney General.

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Crime Situation  
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17. (SBU) The Ambassador asked about growing reports of violent crime in Ghana. Owusu-Ankomah acknowledged that people in Ghana should be vigilant and should avoid driving on roads outside Accra at night. Armed robberies are being committed by unsophisticated "desperados," most of whom are involved in or using drugs, at times using crude homemade weapons. Because of increased patrolling and police actions in the cities, these criminals have moved into more rural areas. Ghanaians have been calling for the hiring of more police, but the police force lacks funding to provide the needed lodging. Lodging is already a problem for the 7,000 additional police that have been hired since 2001.

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Arms Trafficking  
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18. (SBU) Owusu-Ankomah said trafficking of small arms through Ghana is a problem, largely because of Ghana's porous borders, especially in the northern regions. The GOG is looking seriously at improving border management, including the introduction of scanners at some border posts.

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Comment  
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19. (C) On the Minister: Owusu-Ankomah was much more engaging and pleasant with us than he had ever been as Attorney General. His support for NCB's Akuoko and his interest in our LOAs (he pulled copies from a folder on his desk) are encouraging. His cooperative attitude may reflect growing confidence in his position in the government and future political prospects (He is one of the eleven reported contenders to be the New Patriotic Party's presidential candidate in 2008.) It may also just reflect our different relationship with the two ministries. When he was Minister of Justice, we clashed at times on TIP, the Westel commercial dispute, and other matters. We have a more positive agenda with the Ministry of Interior, including the promise of assistance through our Letters of Agreement and upcoming police training. Whatever the reason, the enthusiasm and cooperative spirit Owusu-Ankomah showed in this meeting should serve us well in our engagement across the range of law enforcement and refugee issues.

110. (C) On the Crime Situation: Owusu-Ankomah's candor on the crime situation was also encouraging. When the Ambassador recently asked the Minister of Defense about crime concerns, he was dismissive, saying it was safer to walk at night in Accra than in most American cities. Ghana Police officials have given mixed signals on the crime situation but flatly deny an increase in the crime rate, especially politically sensitive crime against foreigners which they feel may scare away investors. In a recent meeting with PolChief, the new Inspector General of Police said violent crime was going down in many parts of Ghana, although criminals would always try to take advantage of opportunities in the wealthy new estate developments which do not have adequate police station protection.

111. (C) More on Crime: RSO reports an increase in reports of violent crime, especially those involving arms, in the past six months. Ghana Police Assistant Commissioner Kofi Boakye said nearly all car hijackings now involve locally manufactured arms. Boakye also said robbery is rampant and that suggesting that armed robbery is limited to certain areas gives the public the false notion that it can be easily swept out. Boakye said robbery is "a clear and present danger" in Ghana, where we are surrounded by wartorn countries." He cited robberies in broad daylight, instances in which robbers shut down the Accra-Kumasi Road to rob up to 30 vehicles, and instances in which robbers hired weapons

from the police or military as especially worrying. Boakye said professional armed robbers need to continue their crime sprees to support their construction of new buildings. Yet police see a new class of amateurs rising who are almost always under the influence of drugs or alcohol and more likely to fire their weapons out of fear. It makes sense to us that a violent crime increase may be linked to increased narcotics trafficking, porous borders, and the availability of small arms.

¶12. (C) On Arms Trafficking: The Minister recently expressed his concern in a press event about the production in Ghana of 100,000 small arms annually, made by blacksmiths in several parts of the country. DATT, RSO, and ECON have seen little evidence that arms trafficking or production has increased to this level in Ghana. A 2001 UNDP report estimated 40,000 illegal weapons in Ghana, most of which were unregistered, but legal types. Many of these were locally produced hunting weapons. The Minister's comments to the press may have had a political agenda. They followed on the heels of a string of armed robberies that received widespread media attention and were perceived as an embarrassment to the ruling NPP party.

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Brief Bio  
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¶13. (U) Member of Parliament for the Sekondi constituency in the Western Region, Papa Owusu-Ankomah became Minister for the Interior in February 2005 after President Kufuor's re-election. Prior to this role, he had stepped up to be Attorney General and Minister of Justice in Kufuor's April 2003 cabinet reshuffle. Previously, he had served as Majority Leader and Parliamentary Affairs Minister since October 2001. Before that, he had been the Deputy Majority Leader and Minister for Youth and Sports. He succeeded the Kufuor government's first Minister of Youth and Sports, Mallam Isa, convicted of misuse of government funds in the spring of ¶2001. He first won election to Parliament in 1996, serving as minority spokesman for information in the previous Parliament.

¶14. (U) Owusu-Ankomah was born on April 27, 1958 in Sekondi. He is an attorney by training, who completed his studies at the University of Ghana. Among other positions, Owusu-Ankomah worked as a lawyer for the Sekondi-Takoradi City Council in the 1980s, and served as Secretary to the Western Region Bar Association in the 1990s. He is an ethnic Fanti and is married, with three children.

¶15. (U) Owusu-Ankomah was generally seen as much more of a Parliamentary team-player than J.H. Mensah, who was renowned for his intellect while disliked for his arrogant and disdainful attitude towards his colleagues on both sides of the aisle. The Minority Leader, Alban Bagbin, expressed to us his own good relations with Owusu-Ankomah. Owusu-Ankomah is among the possible NPP contenders to succeed Kufuor.  
YATES